STM JOURNALS

Journal of
Control & Instrumentation

https://journals.stmjournals.com/joci

ISSN: 2229-6972 (Online)
ISSN: 2347-7237 (Print)
Volume 15, Issue 3, 2024
September—December
DOI (Journal): 10.37591/JoCI

Review JoCI

Advances in Speed Control Techniques for Three-phase Induction Motors

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Abstract

Induction motors are pivotal in modern industrial applications due to their efficiency and adaptability. Electric motors that run on alternating current (AC) and are driven by a rotating magnetic field are called induction motors. They consist of coils that use electromagnetic induction to transform electrical energy into mechanical energy, a rotor, and a stator. AC induction motors are incredibly adaptable, efficient, and have a comparatively straightforward construction. This paper provides a comprehensive review of speed control techniques for three-phase induction motors, emphasizing their significance in enhancing energy efficiency, process control, and operational flexibility. Starting from fundamental principles to advanced control strategies like variable frequency drives, the review explores how these technologies optimize motor performance and longevity. Key benefits include reduced energy consumption, improved product quality, and compliance with environmental standards. The integration of speed control systems with automation enhances system efficiency and facilitates predictive maintenance, contributing to cost savings and technological advancement in industrial settings.

Keywords: Induction motors, speed control, variable frequency drives (VFDs), energy efficiency, process control, industrial automation, maintenance, technological advancements

INTRODUCTION

Induction motors are electric motors that use alternating current (AC), propelled by a magnetic field that rotates. They are made up of a rotor, a stator, and coils that convert electrical energy into mechanical energy using electromagnetic induction. AC induction motors are highly efficient and flexible, and relatively simple in design, which allows them to match the load demand for almost any electrical application. An induction motor is shown in Figure 1.

A stator is an outer, non-moving chamber in which the rotor spins. It is formed by a ring of electromagnets designed as a cylinder to produce a rotating magnetic field. Copper wire wound throughout the cylinder's interior creates magnetic poles, with one pole of each magnet facing towards the center. When alternating current flows through these wire coils, they form a pair of alternating poles. The alternating poles create an alternating magnetic field that rotates with unified strength. Types of induction motors are shown in Figure 2.

A rotor also consists of a group of electromagnets arranged around a cylinder, and it is housed inside the stator. The magnet fields activated within the rotor are attracted to the magnetic field produced by the stator. Hence why the magnetic field induced in the stator induces a magnetic field in the rotor.

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Receiving Date: August 08, 2024
Accepted Date: August 24, 2024
Published Date: September 01, 2024

Citation: Brahmanand Gandhi, Nand Lal Shah, Prateek Nigam. Advances in Speed Control Techniques for Three-phase Induction Motors. Journal of Control & Instrumentation. 2024; 15(3): 1–8p.

Figure 1. Induction motor.

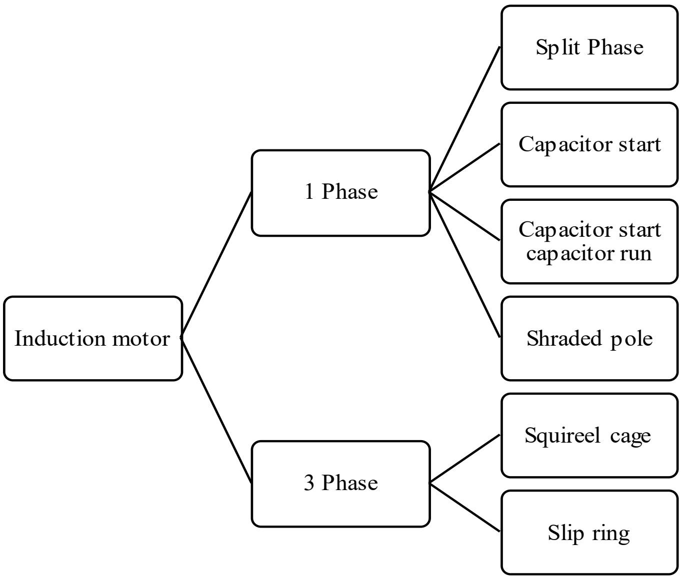

Figure 2. Types of induction motor [1].

Table 1. Parameters of the three-phase induction motor used.

Motor Type	Three-Phase Induction (AC)
Motor type (AC)	Three-phase induction
Type	EM-3330-3C
Number of poles	4
Rotating field speed	1420/1670 RPM
Frequency	50/60 Hz
Current	1.4 A
Power	0.3 kW
Motor type (AC)	Three-phase induction

CONTROLLING METHOD IN INDUCTION MOTOR

Parameters of a Three-Phase Induction Motor

The three-phase induction motor utilized in this final project research has a star (Y) as its source connection. The three-phase induction motor parameters are listed in Table 1.

MOTOR SPECIFICATIONS

System Design

The system design and modeling aim to illustrate the speed control of a three-phase induction motor using an inverter regulated by a proportional-integral-derivative (PID) controller. Tool design block diagram is shown in Figure 3. Figure 4 depicts the setup, where a DC voltage source feeds the inverter to convert it into adjustable AC voltage with frequency control, enabling the rotation of the induction motor. The actual speed of the motor is continuously compared to a reference speed, and the resulting speed error is fed back to the PID controller. The PID controller adjusts parameters—proportional gain Kp, integral gain Ki, and derivative gain Kd—through iterative tuning until achieving minimal error. This iterative process ensures precise motor speed control and optimal performance [2].

Three-Phase Inverter

The three-phase inverter described here is a sophisticated electronic device designed to convert DC voltage and current into three-phase AC voltage and current (Figure 4). This conversion is pivotal in numerous applications where precise control over motor speed, torque, and direction is essential. At its core, the inverter employs advanced power semiconductor devices such as insulated gate bipolar transistors (IGBTs) or metal-oxide-semiconductor field effect transistors (MOSFETs). These components switch rapidly under the control of complex algorithms, typically utilizing pulse-width modulation (PWM) techniques. The switching pattern determines the output waveform's frequency and amplitude, mimicking the characteristics of three-phase AC power. Gate drivers are integral to this process, providing the necessary signals to turn the power semiconductors on and off swiftly and accurately. System design view of a three-phase inverter is shown in Figure 5. The result is a reliable and efficient method to drive three-phase induction motors, offering flexibility in industrial automation, renewable energy systems, and other applications requiring variable-speed operation and precise motor control [2]. In Figure 6 is a system design that has been assembled and put together in a box.

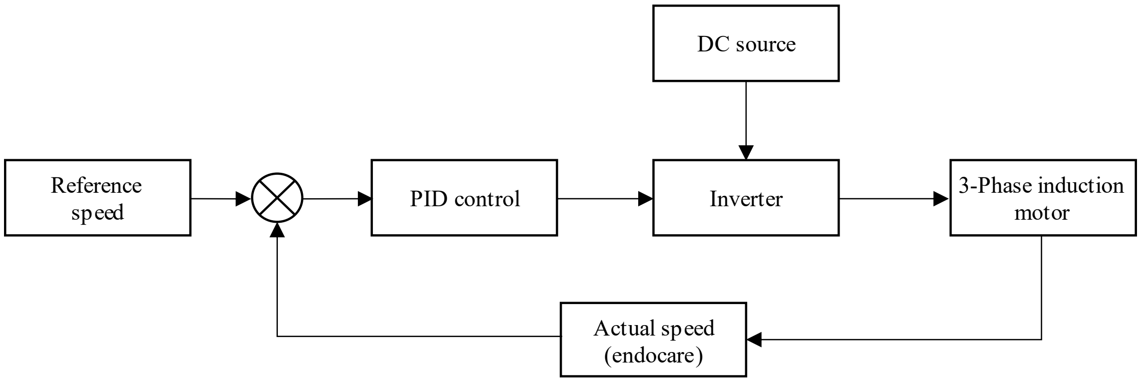

Figure 3. Tool design block diagram.

Figure 4. Three-phase inverter.

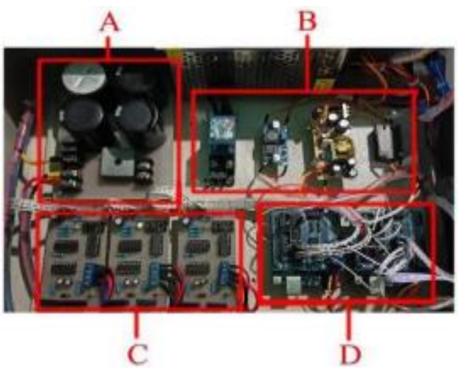

Figure 5. System design view of a three-phase inverter.

Image Description

a. Rectifier
b. Power supply
c. Three-phase inverter driver
d. Microcontroller

The components described form an essential system for converting DC voltage and current into three-phase AC voltage and current. The rectifier serves to convert AC mains voltage into DC, crucial for subsequent stages. The power supply ensures stable DC voltage for the entire system, sourced either from mains or DC batteries. The three-phase inverter driver controls power semiconductors like IGBTs or MOSFETs, using pulse-width modulation (PWM) to generate precise three-phase AC output from the DC input. This output is vital for driving three-phase AC motors with variable speed control. The microcontroller orchestrates these components, managing PWM generation, monitoring system parameters like voltage and current, and interfacing with external controls or sensors for operational feedback. Together, these components enable efficient and adjustable motor control in applications ranging from industrial machinery and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to renewable energy and electric vehicles, ensuring optimal performance and energy efficiency [2].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Guo et al. [3] focus on the challenges of high energy consumption and costs associated with air compressors in hydrogen fuel cells (HFCs). They highlight the efficacy of variable-frequency drives (VFDs) in improving energy efficiency but note the lack of comprehensive data on real-world applications hindering industry standardization. Their review aims to provide an industrial perspective on motors, HFCs, air compressors, and dedicated VFDs, serving as a reference for researchers in the field.

Kalel et al.'s [4] study discusses the integration of Industry 4.0 principles in electric drives, emphasizing reliability and uninterrupted service. They propose a fast-switching concept for induction motor drives (IMDs) to enhance reliability, particularly in scenarios where sensors may fail. Control strategies like local control and loss compensation are evaluated to mitigate failures and ensure continuous operation.

Rehman and Choi [5] address the challenges in accurate power measurement for electric vehicle (EV) VFDs, caused by non-sinusoidal PWM signals and harmonic distortions. They propose a novel power measurement method using lock-in amplifier (LIA) and lock-in amplifier frequency locked loop (LIA-FLL) to achieve precise measurements under varying frequency conditions.

Kitaneh et al. [6] explore various starting methods for AC induction motors to optimize performance and reduce starting current. They emphasize the importance of selecting appropriate starting methods based on voltage and load evaluations to ensure efficient motor operation and longevity.

Suman et al. [1] compare switching table based direct torque control (ST-DTC) and direct torque control with space vector modulation (DTC-SVM) techniques for three-phase induction motors. Their study highlights the advantages of DTC-SVM in reducing torque ripple, noise, and improving motor efficiency, validated through simulations using MATLAB/SIMULINK.

Marcos-Andrade et al. [7] propose a sliding mode control approach for asynchronous motor speed regulation to enhance robustness and performance across various applications. Their study evaluates different control strategies to minimize vibration and improve overall motor efficiency.

Ramesh et al. [8] advocate for enhancing higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in engineering education through practical experiments using VFDs with induction motors. They demonstrate the integration of analytical tools like MS-Excel to foster critical thinking and data analysis skills among students.

Durantay et al. [9] discuss the transition from traditional to electric compression services, focusing on high-speed induction motors and their application in compressor systems. They highlight technological advancements and operational benefits, including reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved process flexibility.

Dutta et al. [10] compare open and closed-loop scalar control techniques for induction motor drives (IMDs) in electric vehicle (EV) applications. Their study examines performance characteristics such as speed, torque, and current under various operating conditions using advanced control strategies and simulation tools.

Ibekwe et al. [11] review the industrial applications of VFDs across different regions, emphasizing their role in enhancing energy efficiency in manufacturing, HVAC, and water treatment sectors. They highlight regional trends in VFD adoption and suggest strategies for optimizing industrial energy usage.

Lee et al. [12] address the issue of high starting currents in induction motor (IM)-driven pipelines and propose a photovoltaic (PV) inverter solution to reduce initial current spikes. They discuss the integration of synchronous scalar controllers to manage starting currents effectively without compromising pipeline functionality.

Li et al. [2] focus on speed regulation technologies for energy conservation using permanent magnet adjustable speed drives (PMASDs). They review different speed regulation schemes, optimization methods, and engineering applications, highlighting PMASDs' potential for improving efficiency in large pump and fan systems.

Petrov et al. [13] conduct a spectrum analysis to evaluate harmonic components in VFD circuits and propose improvements to enhance power efficiency in scraper conveyor drive systems. They emphasize the importance of harmonic filtering and insulation integrity to ensure safe and efficient electrical operations.

Vala et al. [14] review the influence of pulse width modulation (PWM) characteristics on partial discharge (PD) phenomena in variable speed PWM (VS-PWM) motor drives. They analyze factors affecting PD occurrence and suggest standardized testing methodologies to improve reliability assessments for electrical machines.

Ioannides et al. [15] explore IoT-based control applications in asynchronous motors, focusing on remote monitoring, fault detection, and real-time feedback capabilities. They discuss the integration of IoT systems in electric drive and wind energy production systems, highlighting their role in enhancing operational efficiency and reliability.

SPEED CONTROL IN INDUCTION MOTORS

Induction motors stand as the workhorses of industrial applications, powering a vast array of machinery with reliability and efficiency. Central to their versatility is the ability to control motor speed—a feature that not only optimizes energy consumption but also enhances operational flexibility and precision in diverse industrial settings.

The demand for precise speed control in induction motors has grown significantly in recent years, driven by the need for increased efficiency, improved process control, and adherence to stringent performance standards. Traditionally, induction motors were operated at fixed speeds using simple on/off control methods, limiting their adaptability to varying load conditions and operational requirements. Speed control of induction motor is shown in Figure 6. However, advancements in control technologies, particularly with the advent of VFDs, have revolutionized the landscape of motor speed control. This paper explores the significance of speed control in induction motors, focusing on the principles, methods, and applications that enable industries to achieve optimal performance and efficiency. From basic voltage and frequency control techniques to sophisticated sensor less and vector control strategies, the evolution of speed control technologies has enabled induction motors to operate at variable speeds with unprecedented precision and reliability. Moreover, the integration of advanced control algorithms and automation systems has further enhanced the capabilities of induction motors, offering industries greater flexibility in adapting to dynamic production demands while minimizing energy consumption and maximizing operational lifespan. Through a comprehensive examination of various speed control techniques, this paper aims to elucidate the pivotal role of speed control in enhancing the overall performance, sustainability, and competitiveness of modern industrial systems powered by induction motors.

Energy Efficiency

Speed control allows induction motors to adjust their operating speed according to the required load, optimizing energy consumption. Motors operating at lower speeds consume less energy because power consumption varies with the cube of the speed. This capability significantly contributes to overall energy efficiency in industrial applications, reducing operational costs associated with electricity usage.

Process Control

In many industrial processes, precise control over motor speeds is critical to ensure consistent and accurate production outputs. Speed control in induction motors enables fine adjustments to match the specific requirements of each process stage. This capability enhances process control by maintaining optimal speeds for different tasks, improving product quality and minimizing production variations.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Induction motors equipped with speed control capabilities offer enhanced flexibility across various applications. They can adapt to changing operational conditions, accommodate different types of loads (such as varying loads or intermittent loads), and adjust to fluctuations in production requirements without compromising efficiency. This adaptability is crucial in industries where operational flexibility is essential for maintaining competitiveness and meeting customer demands.

Reduced Mechanical Stress

Starting an induction motor at full speed can subject it to mechanical stress, leading to wear and potential damage over time. Speed control methods such as soft starting and stopping allow motors to start gradually and smoothly, minimizing mechanical stress on components. This not only extends the motor's lifespan but also reduces maintenance costs associated with repairs and replacements.

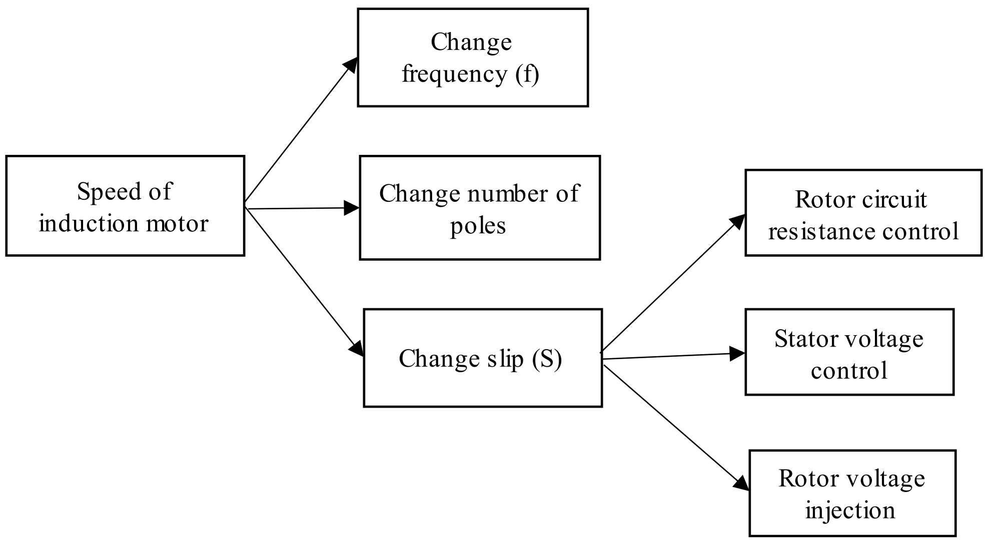

Figure 6. Speed control of induction motor.

Improved Product Quality

Industries such as manufacturing and processing rely on consistent product quality to meet stringent specifications and standards. Speed control ensures precise control over production processes, such as conveyor belt speeds or mixing speeds, thereby maintaining uniform product characteristics. This capability enhances reliability and customer satisfaction by delivering products that consistently meet quality requirements.

Noise and Vibration Reduction

Operating induction motors at lower speeds significantly reduces noise and vibration levels generated during operation. This reduction creates a quieter and more comfortable working environment, particularly in settings where noise reduction is crucial, such as offices, hospitals, or residential areas adjacent to industrial facilities. It also contributes to a safer workplace by minimizing noise-related health hazards for workers.

Compliance with Regulations

Speed control technologies help industries comply with environmental regulations and sustainability standards. By reducing energy consumption and emissions, these technologies support efforts to minimize carbon footprints and enhance corporate social responsibility initiatives. Compliance with regulations not only avoids penalties but also improves public perception and strengthens relationships with regulatory bodies and stakeholders.

Enhanced System Integration

Speed control systems can be seamlessly integrated with automation and control systems, enabling centralized monitoring and control of motor operations. This integration improves overall system efficiency by optimizing motor performance, reducing downtime, and facilitating predictive maintenance practices. It also enhances productivity by automating processes and minimizing human intervention in routine operations.

Cost Savings

Despite potentially higher initial investments in speed control technologies such as VFDs, the long-term operational cost savings are substantial. These savings primarily come from improved energy efficiency, reduced maintenance costs due to minimized wear and tear, and enhanced process reliability. The return on investment (ROI) from implementing speed control technologies often justifies the initial capital expenditure, making them a cost-effective solution in the long run.

Technological Advancements

Ongoing advancements in speed control technologies continue to drive innovation in induction motor applications. These advancements lead to improved performance, reliability, and versatility across various industrial sectors. New technologies enable more precise control algorithms, enhanced motor design features, and integration with smart systems for predictive analytics and remote monitoring, further expanding the capabilities and applications of induction motors in modern industries.

CONCLUSION

The review underscores the critical role of speed control in enhancing the operational efficiency and sustainability of three-phase induction motors across diverse industrial applications. By enabling motors to adjust speed according to load demands, speed control technologies such as VFDs significantly reduce energy consumption and mechanical stress, thereby extending motor lifespan and lowering maintenance costs. Moreover, precise speed regulation enhances process control, ensuring consistent product quality and compliance with regulatory standards. As industries continue to advance, integrating these technologies with smart systems promises further improvements in productivity, reliability, and environmental impact mitigation. Future research should focus on refining control algorithms and expanding applications to drive continuous innovation and adoption of speed control solutions in industrial practices.

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